

DECISION DATE 7 April 2009	APPLICATION NO. 09/00012/CU A13	PLANNING COMMITTEE: 9 March 2009
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE, REMEDIAL WORKS AND EXTENSIONS TO FARMHOUSE, FOLLY AND BARN TO CREATE AMENITY SERVICES FOR ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS		SITE ADDRESS MIDDLETON TOWERS/ PONTINS HOLIDAY CAMP CARR LANE MIDDLETON LANCASHIRE LA3 3LJ
APPLICANT: PRV Middleton Towers In Administration C/o Agent		AGENT: SJD Architects

REASON FOR DELAY

Not applicable.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

Middleton Parish Council - Observations awaited.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

Countryside area within the Lancaster District Local Plan.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

County Council Highways - Observations awaited.

Environmental Health - Observations awaited.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

A letter has been received from the Secretary of the newly formed Middleton Towers Residents Association, which promotes the interests of people living on the site. It supports the proposal, as they want the community to grow and to be attractive to prospective new residents.

Any other representations received will be reported orally at Committee.

REPORT

This proposal involves the group of three Grade II listed buildings within the Middleton Towers retirement village complex, which occupies the site of the former Pontins Holiday camp off Carr Lane. The original planning consent for the retirement village required that they should be restored as part of the development but so far this has not happened. An application for Listed Building Consent has also been submitted and details of this appear in a separate report.

Around 50 of the dwellings at Middleton Towers are complete and most of them are occupied. The required bus link to Morecambe and Lancaster is now in operation. However, the company which was carrying out the development, Prestigious Living, is now in administration. The scheme is now in the hands of the Allied Irish Bank. Their intention is to complete Phase I of the development.

They intend to make some changes to the layout to reflect market demand (it appears that the bungalows have sold more readily than the flats) and this will be the subject of a further application for planning permission. This will allow them to meet their obligation to fund affordable housing, and at the same time create a viable community sufficient to support at least some of the community facilities envisaged as part of the original proposal. They propose to adapt the historic buildings on the site to accommodate these. These are:

- The folly tower on the seafront which gives the site its name;
- A former farmhouse, which was used as a public house when the holiday camp was in use; and,
- A large stone barn.

The farmhouse is in the worst condition; it has been vacant for over ten years and the roof needs immediate attention. The applicants have already, with the agreement of Officers of the Council, begun a programme of basic remedial repairs to the farmhouse and barn in advance of the current applications being determined, to prevent further decay and deterioration.

The farmhouse building would be converted to provide a reception and administrative area, with living accommodation for staff above. There would also be a large kitchen, associated with a function room housed in a new building linking the farmhouse with the barn. The barn itself would accommodate a gym, together with a changing area for a new swimming pool. This will occupy a new building on the site of a building which used to house Pontins fish and chip shop, which is to be demolished.

Of the proposed two new structures the link between the farmhouse and the barn is to have glass walls. The swimming pool building is shown as having rendered walls. Both will have slate roofs. In both cases the architectural forms proposed in are simple, low key ones which will not detract from the character of the existing buildings.

The present proposal does not involve any alterations to the folly tower, which is too small to be of practical use as a community area. It is also in less urgent need of attention. It is however of some interest from a natural and historic point of view, as it is well suited to use as a bat roost for any bats displaced from the other two buildings.

The proposal is accompanied by a substantial amount of supporting information including a design and access statement, a heritage statement and a bat survey. It is noted that the potential for the use of renewable energy in the existing buildings is limited because of the need to respect their listed status. However, there is potential for this in the new structures, and this is reflected in the imposition of an appropriate planning condition.

Policy SC1 of the Core Strategy emphasises the importance of developing in a location where it is convenient to walk, cycle and travel by public transport, and the importance of using previously developed land where possible. Of the "saved" policies in the Lancaster District Local Plan, E33 states that proposals affecting a Listed Building which would have an adverse effect on its special architectural character or historic interest will not be permitted. However Policy E34 states that planning permission for appropriate new uses for Listed Buildings at risk may be permitted where this will secure the future of the building and retain its historical and architectural integrity.

Because of the recession it is unlikely that the retirement village at Middleton will be completed in its originally envisaged form, at least in the immediate future. The development occupies an isolated position which does not meet all the criteria set out in Policy SC1 but the retirement village is an existing commitment, and has to be seen in this context. There is a clear need to provide this rather isolated community with a meeting place and a focal point. At the same time there is a need to secure the future of the historic buildings on the site, particularly in the case of the farmhouse.

Various details of scheme need to be secured by suitably worded conditions, including details of the materials and the use of renewable energy sources for the new build parts of the project. With these provisos, the proposal is to be welcomed.

No specific proposals are put forward for the folly tower, and only minor repairs are needed. It is however desirable that the repairs should be undertaken at the same time as the remainder, to ensure the integrity of the group of buildings on the site. A condition dealing with this matter is therefore included below.

The consultation period for this application expires a couple of days after the Committee meeting. It is therefore recommended that consideration of any late observations should be delegated to the Head of Planning Services. However, on the proviso that any further responses do not raise an suingnificant new issues, this proposal is of some merit to the community and is supported.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

This application has to be considered in relation to two sections of the Human Rights Act: Article 8 (privacy/family life), and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). There are no issues arising from the proposal which appear to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the application be delegated to the Head of Planning Services (for consideration of any further consultation responses) with a recommendation that **PERMISSION BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions::

1. Standard three year condition.
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.
3. Details and/or samples of materials to be agreed.
4. Landscaping to be agreed and implemented.
5. Details of renewable energy sources for new build parts of the project to be agreed.
6. Programme of works for the folly tower to be agreed and implemented before the farmhouse and barn are brought into use.
7. As required by consultees (if appropriate).